

OPEN LETTER

April 27, 2016

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Cabinet members,

The economies and workforces of Alberta and Canada have been hit hard in recent months. There has been considerable pressure on the federal Liberal Cabinet to respond, including [Premier Notley's](#) recent address in Kananaskis and [former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's](#) public comments urging Cabinet members to ensure major pipeline projects are approved.

This most recent push for new tar sands, or oil sands, export pipelines exhibits a number of problematic arguments that deserve response. Adding new pipelines will not solve economic woes caused by instability in world oil markets and a world that is rapidly - and necessarily - transitioning away from fossil fuels in order to safeguard our climate for future generations.

We must proceed with a fair review of pipeline projects that includes all scientific evidence, welcomes public participation and puts in place a climate test that ensures Canada doesn't build infrastructure that makes the 1.5 degree limit of global temperature rise impossible. The review must include true consultations with Indigenous communities and respect the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Oil to tidewater won't fix tar sands troubles

As [argued by Ross Belot](#), former senior manager with one of Canada's largest energy companies, a new pipeline won't solve Alberta's woes because "...the problem a pipeline to tidewater was intended to address doesn't exist anymore."

The abundance of cheap fracked oil in the U.S. and the [global oil crash](#) have contributed to narrowing the price differential between North American crude (whose benchmark is West Texas Intermediate, "WTI") and global crude (whose benchmark is Brent) to almost [zero](#). As a result, the benefits Canadian tar sands producers once sought by trying to access higher returns on global markets [have vanished](#). The discount that now exists for Western Canadian Select (WCS) relative to WTI is now due to inherent quality differences that make WCS more costly to refine.

Building new pipelines to get tar sands crude to tidewater and foreign markets cannot overcome the quality discount.

New pipelines incompatible with our fair share towards a 1.5 degree world

The Kinder Morgan, Northern Gateway, Line 3 and Energy East pipelines would lock Alberta and Canada into producing and shipping heavy crude for many years to come, well beyond the 2050 deadline in the Paris climate agreement set as a goal for weaning ourselves off of fossil fuels. Building more pipelines conflicts with the expertise of more than [100 scientists](#) in Canada who have publicly called for no further expansion in the tar sands.

With the realities of climate change intensifying, more people are demanding action and world leaders will need to respond. In an increasingly de-carbonized world, particularly carbon intensive forms of heavy oil, including tar sands crude, will become [economic risks](#).

Uniting for the protection of our climate and water

These pipeline projects present significant risks not only to our shared climate, but to critical waterways along their paths. The proposed tar sands export pipelines would see diluted bitumen transported over, under and through critical waterways including the [drinking water sources](#) for millions of Canadians.

The U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) recently released the [most comprehensive study of diluted bitumen to date](#), affirming it substantially differs from other types of oil when spilled near or in water. Diluted bitumen creates a unique and complex spill scenario as bitumen sinks in water after a short period of weathering. The study concluded that special response strategies and tactics are needed to respond and cleanup diluted bitumen spills; however, these have not yet been fully developed in Canada or the U.S.

Respecting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

It has been suggested that Canadians must unite around a nation-building pipeline, and Prime Minister Trudeau must lead us to this, even before a fair review of these projects is complete. Doing so would require agreeing to force a pipeline through the lands of Indigenous communities that have raised clear concerns about the duty to consult, as well as the impacts these pipelines will have on their lands. Forcing a pipeline approval will be on a collision course with respect for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; be it [Northern Gateway](#), [Kinder Morgan Line 3](#) or [Energy East](#).

Indicating support for one of these pipeline projects as requested would require ignoring the voices of major cities along the pipeline routes, countless communities wanting a fair review of these projects and stands to run in conflict with ongoing provincial reviews of certain projects.

There are solutions. Opposing new tar sands export pipelines isn't anti-Albertan

Clearly workers and their families, even whole communities, are hurting in Alberta. No one wants this. But more of the same will not fix the problem.

A [new poll](#) asking Albertans how they would like revenue raised by a proposed carbon tax spent indicates that, by more than a two-to-one margin, people favour spending it on green energy projects, transit and energy efficiencies. [144,000 Albertan jobs](#) can be created with government policies that encourage and invest in renewable energy, energy efficiency and public transportation.

Let's unite around a better future, one we can be proud to hand to our children and grandchildren's children.

Sincerely,

Action Environnement Basses Laurentides
(Québec)
Association québécoise de lutte contre la
pollution atmosphérique
Brandon/Westman chapter, Council of
Canadians
Canadian Parents For Climate Action

Calgary chapter, Council of Canadians
Citizens' Climate Lobby Canada
ClimateFast
Climate Justice Saskatoon
Comox Valley chapter, Council of Canadians
Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montréal

Council of Canadians
Cowichan Valley chapter, Council of Canadians
Ecology Action Centre
Ecology Ottawa
Fredericton chapter, Council of Canadians
Georgia Strait Alliance
Greenpeace Canada
Green 13 Toronto
Guelph chapter, Council of Canadians
Kent County chapter, Council of Canadians
Leadnow
Leap Manifesto–Peterborough
L'Équipe d'Action Environnement Basses-Laurentides
Les Citoyens au Courant
London chapter, Council of Canadians
Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition
Mid-Island chapter, Council of Canadians
Montreal chapter, Council of Canadians
NON à une marée noire dans le Saint-Laurent
Northumberland County chapter, Council of Canadians
Northwatch
Ottawa chapter, Council of Canadians
Oil Change International
Peace NB
People for Peace, London, Ontario
Peterborough Chapter of For Our Grandchildren
Peterborough and Kawarthas chapter, Council of Canadians

Pipeline Awareness Renfrew County
Polaris Institute
Prospérité sans pétrole
Quill Plains chapter, Council of Canadians
Quinte chapter, Council of Canadians
Quinte Water Watchers
Regina chapter, Council of Canadians
Saint John chapter, Council of Canadians
Saskatoon chapter, Council of Canadians
Sierra Club, BC
South Shore chapter, Council of Canadians
Sustainable North Grenville
Stand (formerly ForestEthics)
Stop Energy East North Bay
Tanker Free BC
Team Ecohealth
Thunder Bay chapter, Council of Canadians
Transition Initiative Kenora
Vancouver / Burnaby chapter, Council of Canadians
Victoria chapter, Council of Canadians
Watershed Sentinel Educational Society, Comox BC
WaterWealth Project
West Coast Environmental Law Association
Wilderness Committee
Williams Lake chapter, Council of Canadians
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350Toronto
350Vancouver